FEATURES

Helpers among us — Repair Café fixes and reuses damaged items

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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Repair Café organizer Karen Bellacosa talks to an attendee WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

An international event got started in Winchester back in 2021 by Bellacosa and Jessica McArdle.

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Repair Café has over 3,000 locations around the world on six continents. It began in Amsterdam 15 years ago as a way to encourage people to reuse damaged items instead of tossing them out.

According to the Repair Cafe website, fixing things instead of buying new ones can reduce carbon emissions used to manufacture everything from clothes, to furniture, to laptops and more.

South Border Road resident Bellacosa runs the program herself these days. A knitwear designer, Bellacosa decries “fast fashion” which means cheap knock-offs of better made garments, most of which end up in landfills after just a few wearings.

“You can see piles of discarded clothing from space!” she says.

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Roofus Hoffmann uses his woodworking stills to repair an item at the Repair Cafe. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Another reason she started Repair Café is to employ “lonely elders with skill sets.”

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"Here they can get together with younger families to show them how to do repairs," Bellacosa says. "It's a good community-building activity."

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And it also brings together men with repair ability. Women can get together in such activities as knitting groups or book clubs, but according to Bellacosa, "guys don't have as many places to hang out. But here they can tackle things together."

Roofus Hoffman, a Mystic Avenue resident, is one of the volunteers. He does woodworking, repairs chairs and even wooden toys. Semi-retired, Hoffman is in the home-building business.

Washington Street resident Randell Drane volunteers because, "I've broken a lot of things, and I have high confidence and also high ignorance in my ability for fix things.

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Martha Troisi uses her sewing skills to make repairs during the recent Repair Cafe. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Mayflower Road resident Martha Troisi will sew damaged coat linings, blue jeans seams, and she even fixed the holes in a baby stroller's net

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retired Chinese medicine doctor, Troisi has been sewing since she was young.

“I even made my own prom dress,” she says.

Hosted by the First Congregational Church across from Winchester Common, the Repair Café will be run four times a year, the next one in June, so residents are encouraged to save their damaged items until then. Or volunteer to fix things.

More information is available at https://www.repaircafewin.com/.

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Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

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Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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